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SUBJECT: GREAT LAKES; SE WOLPE'S AUGUST 28 CONSULTATIONS
WITH THE FRENCH

Classified By: Andrew Young, Political Counselor, 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: French officials at the Presidency and MFA were in general agreement with Great Lakes Special Envoy Howard Wolpe during his August 28 meetings in Paris. The French agreed on the need to encourage continued cooperation between the DRC and Rwanda, and between Presidents Kabila and Kagame personally, and described France's program to promote small-scale development projects that would tend to bind those living on both sides of the DRC and Rwandan borders in an effort to reduce the possibility of renewed conflict. They indicated a desire to continue working with the U.S. on the region's problems, with SE Wolpe offering a similar intention to work together. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Recently appointed Great Lakes Special Envoy Howard Wolpe met, separately, with officials from the French Presidency and MFA on August 28. Deputy Diplomatic Advisor (and chief Africa Advisor) Bruno Joubert and his deputies Romain Serman and Remi Marechaux hosted the meeting at the Presidency, with AF-watcher and AF-assistant also attending. SE Wolpe, along with AF-watcher, met later at the MFA with AF A/S-equivalent Stephane Gompertz, GOF Special Envoy Christian Connan, and other staff.

Meeting at the Presidency

13. (C) SE Wolpe began the meeting by reviewing his Africa-related activities since he served in the same position during the Clinton Administration. He focused on various training programs that were intended to build trust and cooperation among various actors in the Great Lakes region. He believed that some of these activities and programs were directly relevant to today's challenges. SE Wolpe described his current mandate as centering on three priorities. The first focused on political issues, including the upcoming elections in Burundi and DRC, dealing with the FDLR and LRA, and working to alleviate gender-based violence. A second priority was the promotion of cohesion between the states of the region and the development of a new security architecture. The third priority was regional economic integration.

14. (C) The French noted that the UN Security Council, in mandating MONUC to assist the FARDC in going after the FDLR, had given MONUC a potentially difficult and undesirable role, mainly because of the questionable nature of the FARDC, the possibility of harm to civilians, and the possibility that MONUC's credibility could be weakened. That said, Joubert said that the outcome had not been as negative as some had feared, and he observed that there were few other means for addressing the FDLR problem. The FARDC was capable of playing a positive role, despite its well-known shortcomings. SE Wolpe noted that some analysts had recently commented that adding 3,000 forces to MONUC would not make much of a difference. What was urged by some was a trained and properly equipped battalion capable of surgical strikes to capture FDLR leaders, whose whereabouts were known or could

be determined.

15. (C) The French agreed with SE Wolpe on the need to sustain the cooperation between DRC and Rwanda. Joubert thought that Kabila had agreed to work with Kagame because of his election concerns and the need for some semblance of calm heading into the elections, a calm that he could depict as progress on his part. Serman agreed, saying that Kabila faced a 15-month period before the elections during which he needed to develop a good "balance sheet" to present to voters. Serman said it was important to use the 15-months also to build trust between DRC and Rwanda, with which SE Wolpe agreed. Serman lamented the lack of forceful leadership on Kabila's part, which led to a discussion of the leadership void in Kinshasa, the opaque nature of decision-making and influence within the DRC government, and the roles of such figures as former Speaker of the National Assembly Vital Kamerhe (who made a good impression on President Sarkozy during his March visit to the DRC), Jean Mbuyu. and Augustin Katumba Mwanke, whom Serman described as Kabila's "Rasputin." Joubert concluded that the issue of who really governs DRC was a "black box."

16. (C) Joubert and Serman described France's current priority of focusing on small-scale development projects (e.g., roads and small power stations) that would benefit both Congolese and Rwandans on both sides of their shared borders. The idea was to build trust and confidence and real economic ties that would bind the two sides and reduce the possibility of conflict. Serman thought the UK idea of opening up the economies of the region and letting free market principles prevail was unrealistic and could lead to unfocused and unorganized results that would not build trust

and cooperation. The small-scale projects he described would, he believe, be better for the region than would a simple free market approach. Serman said the French hoped to establish markers over the next 15 months (via conferences or high-level visits) that could be used to apply pressure on the parties to make actual progress. He said that the new French Special Envoy, Christian Connan (with whom SE Wolpe would meet later) would oversee the development projects the GOF favored.

17. (C) SE Wolpe said he generally agreed with the French approach at least insofar as its objectives were concerned. He said he looked forward to working with the Presidency on this and other related issues pertaining to the Great Lakes. At the conclusion of the meeting, Joubert said that he would soon become Ambassador to Morocco, to be replaced by Andre Parant. He indicated that Serman and Marechaux would continue in their present functions at the Presidency.

Meeting at the MFA

18. (C) In his subsequent meeting at the MFA, SE Wolpe had a wide-ranging discussion with AF A/S-equivalent Stephane Gompertz, GOF Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Christian Connan, and Desk Officers for the DRC, Central Africa, East Africa, and Rwanda-Burundi-Uganda. SE Wolpe highlighted his mandate and his recent work with the Wilson Center and World Bank on training efforts for confidence building in the region. He underscored that in his new role, one of his priorities was to help improve the contacts and cooperation among all parties.

19. (C) SE Wolpe asked if France was concerned about the current effort to confront the FDLR using FARDC troops and noted that some had raised the idea that interventions by special forces units might be more effective. Gompertz replied that the behavior of FARDC troops in the field has been "disastrous" and there were recent and growing examples of inappropriate actions. Gompertz saw the need for the very top of the DRC's defense ministry to impose better political and operational cohesion among the FARDC. He questioned whether the FDLR could be defeated militarily, and if Rwanda needed to do more politically to help with the DDR process. Gompertz asked whether Rwanda "needed the FDLR" as a

convenient pretext for continued operations in eastern DRC. SE Wolpe replied that he believed Rwanda viewed the FDLR as a problem and did not want them to continue. However, a military defeat would be difficult since the FDLR could follow the example of the LRA and become increasingly hidden and mobile in the face of greater pressure. Therefore, new military strategies should perhaps be considered. Also, the Rwandans had recognized that 80% of the FDLR cannot be considered "genocidaires" from 1994 because they are too young. To help the repatriation process for these troops, it is important to assure good treatment and establish a track record of positive examples. Gompertz agreed and added that Rwanda could help the process by publishing a new, concise and accurate list of those it sought as perpetrators of the genocide.

¶10. (C) SE Wolpe underscored the importance of improved civilian protection, which should be part of the strategy going forward in evaluating next steps to deal with the FDLR.

Gompertz agreed, but noted that it was not possible to say publicly that the military effort has been a failure. He suggested considering the establishment of "safe havens" as part of MONUC's mission -- perhaps described as "Phase 2." SE Wolpe added that greater civilian protection could be written into MONUC's mandate. Gompertz said he had heard that a MONUC camp was recently approached by civilians for protection and the MONUC commander turned away all the women and girls, stating that females were not allowed in the camp.

Gompertz agreed with SE Wolpe that enhanced civilian protection was also imperative in the operations against the LRA.

France's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes

¶11. (C) Christian Connan, France's recently appointed Special Envoy to for the Great Lakes, explained that his role would focus more on economic integration than political reconciliation, citing the example of post-war efforts between France and Germany. Unfortunately, DRC President Kabila has not yet replied positively. Connan explained that some of the economic development schemes under consideration include expanding the regional electricity network and joint production of proven natural gas fields. At this time, joint exploitation of oil and mineral wealth appear to face too many hurdles. France will also look for new opportunities for grass roots economic assistance. SE Wolpe responded positively to this approach. He suggested other possible

activities, including regional parliamentary training and facilitating regional networking for professional groups. Connan agreed with SE Wolpe that the proliferation of different regional organizations could prove to be a hindrance to effective economic integration and that an effort to rationalize the roles and responsibilities of these organizations would be quite helpful.

¶12. (C) Both sides agreed to continue close consultation both bilaterally and perhaps within larger groupings.

¶13. (U) SE Wolpe has cleared this message.

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